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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the social phenomenon of leadership succession in a school from the perspective of the successor, based on the author's own experience in succeeding to the principalship of a junior high school. Using a combination of participant observation, informal interview, and existing and collected documents, the study was designed to examine a native view of succession--how this principal made sense of the experience from the moment a succession was possible until the role of new leader no longer seemed useful for explanatory or interpretive purposes in the school. The interaction among groups and individuals separates the period of study into three parts: prearrival or pre-succession (April to August), the succession period (September to December), and post-succession (January to February). Two themes drawn from the data and from other succession studies surfaced immediately: personal traits and others' perception of successor's intentions. Four additional themes that dominated the experience are identified and discussed: (1) perceptions of actors developing across time; (2) actors' expectations; (3) environmental norms, conditions, and events in the school, district, and community; and (4) new social patterns, which developed gradually to a dominant position in the coded references. The discussion illustrates how each of these six themes delineate the three stages of succession. References are included. (TE)

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LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION AS SOCIAL VALIDATION
THE VIEW FROM INSIDE THE PRINCIPALSHIP

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When leadership in key administrative offices in organizations changes, the working consensus among members of work groups, their superiors, and environments is altered. The characteristics of individuals and organizations that tend to lead to succession, organizational outcomes, succession frequency, or succession's functional, dysfunctional, or nonexistent effects are central to questions about these changes in leadership. (Allen, Panian, & Lotz, 1979; Brown, 1982; Gordon & Rosen, 1981; Lieberson & O'Connor, 1972; Ogawa & Hart, 1985; Pfeffer, 1978). While Gephart (1978) established a grounded theory of status degradation in a study of his own forced succession from leadership in a student organization, no studies that explore the sense making experience of the new leader appear in the literature. The purpose of this paper is to examine leadership succession in a school as a phenomenological event from the perspective of the successor, thus adding to the accumulating case evidence additional data on succession as a discrete social phenomena.

The Native View

Interest in idealist or phenomenological epistemologies for understanding social phenomena is growing. Although different assumptions guide positivist and phenomenological perspectives, more ecclectic use of a variety of perspectives is being increasingly applied by scholars and practitioners. Bolman and Deal (1984) argue that four conceptual frames (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) offer unique multiply useful perspectives on life and work in organizations useful to researchers and practitioners. In order to examine the view of organizational life offered by different conceptual frames and apply them to the action context of administration, different epistemologies are required (Argyris, 1979). Conversely, the neglect of different perspectives can lead to a paucity of detail, conceptualization, and alternatives for choice. Whether an ultimate social reality is discoverable or not may be a conundrum of the social sciences, but the current state of scholarly activity supports the retention of multiple ways of knowing for some time to come. Both positivist and phenomenological approaches can contribute to knowledge about organizations (Allison, 1983; Popper, 1975).

Gregory (1983) applies the notion of the "native" view to the understanding of multiple cultures and culture conflicts in organizations. By examining how native participants "make sense out of their own behavior" the demystification of behavior can be accomplished. When leadership succession takes place, organizations face problems of potential cultural conflict between new leaders, established cultural patterns, expectations, beliefs, and group power structures. The differences between leader perceptions and perceptions of groups and individuals with whom they work can lead to conflicts or synthesis, shared ways of coping with experience (Gregory, 1983) or reliance on highly individualistic interpretations of motive and intent. The native view of succession focuses attention on the human action and

interpretations that are the "stuff from which organizations are made" (Greenfield, 1975, p. 71).

McDermott, Gospodinoff, and Aron (1975) argue for "fine grained analyses of small samples of behavior". This practice, rooted in German idealism, is applied to the rich studies of schools produced by Cusick (1981) and others. In its most unique form the "intimate acquaintance" with events important for analyzing administrative life can be offered by participants (Dr. Samuel Johnson cited in Gronn, 1982). The study of succession to date, concentrating on effects, has resulted in findings of no effect, positive effects, and negative effects. Given this plethora of conflicting data, phenomenological study can bring increased understanding of contextual and individual dynamics that bear on leadership succession.

Succession

When leaders are replaced in organizations a succession takes place. The changes succession brings can center around the new personal and leadership style of the successor, re-define work and social patterns, establish new networks of communication within the school and with the environment, and open members' minds to new possibilities (Child & Kieser, 1981). Careful explication of succession dynamics may lead to an understanding of circumstances in which succession might be most advantageous for the organization (Brown, 1982). Offering a unique opportunity to study leadership in transition, succession studies reveal relationships between leader characteristics and effectiveness in given contexts, influences of multiple levels of decision processes on the future action and influence of new leaders, external and internal pressures that develop for succession, and the intentions and perceptions of participants that affect succession effects.

Reviewing the implications of succession research for school administrators, Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) employ a succession framework emphasizing prearrival factors, arrival factors, and succession effects (Gordon & Rosen, 1981) to analyze succession literature. This framework provides a useful vehicle for understanding implications of succession for leadership research and administrative policy.

Prearrival Factors

The reasons for a succession are varied. Death, promotion, retirement, or poor performance may stimulate the succession process. Death appears to result in discontinuity because the transfer of the predecessor's knowledge to the successor is absent. Promotion, however, is often viewed as a sign that the organization has judged the predecessor's policies and behaviors as successful, tending to result in successor reluctance to make too many changes. When a successful school is inherited, even positive improvements may not receive justified attention (Grusky, 1960; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). Other reasons for succession such as poor performance are common (Allen, Panian, & Lotz, 1979). There is evidence that, though poor performance may result in dismissal,

succession itself is often a ritual with significance imbedded in meaning rather than in organizational performance. Scapegoating (Gamson & Scotch, 1964), status degradation (Gephart, 1978), and attribution (Pfeffer, 1978; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1980) are all processes identified as explanatory of succession phenomena in the literature.

The selection process influences successor behavioral options as well (Gordon & Rosen, 1981). Because superintendents and other top level administrators play an important role in principal selection, the perception of expertise of the sponsor, the stringency of selection requirements, and the size and depth of the candidate pool all affect perceptions of organizational members about the new leader (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Gordon & Rosen, 1981). Perceptions of group members of the task expertise of the new leader are influenced by perceived competence of the selection agent (Knight & Weiss, 1980). Other studies explore the relationships among selection method processes, group success, and leader competence, which appear to be of importance in the eventual impact of successors on their groups and organizations (Hollander, Fallon & Edwards, 1977; Hollander & Julian, 1978; Hollander & Julian, 1970). Leaders who have proven themselves on required tasks also appear to receive follower acceptance more readily (Goldman & Fraas, 1965). The perceived expertise of new leaders and their sponsors and selection agents are important variables in leader succession dynamics.

The reputation of the new leader may also effect succession interactions. Preconceived notions of expertise, leadership style, maleability, social congruence, and other factors are held by superordinates, subordinates, and relevant environmental groups. These notions may be both positive and negative (Carlson, 1961; Ganz & Hoy, 1977; Gordon & Rosen, 1981; Guest, 1962; Helmich, 1977). Task or relationship orientation and other leadership characteristics may vary according to the particular organizational context. Miskel and Cosgrove argue that perceptions of subordinates may account for the greatest impact of leadership style (1985).

Origin of the new leaders is a factor as well. Their insider or outsider origin can have important positive or negative effects, depending on particular organizational and group contingencies (Baty, Evan, Rothmermel, 1971;Birnbaum, 1971; Wyler & Conrad, 1984). While an insider may be more constrained by existing social patterns, expectations of continuity, or internal rivalries, an outsider may lack important information in situations of high intraorganizational conflict or greater socialization needs. Insiders have been characterized as adapters, outsiders as innovators (Carlson, 1962, 1972, & 1979). Other studies reveal more organizational change under outside succession (Helmich, 1977; Helmich & Brown, 1979), a perception on the part of new outsider administrators that change is necessary for job promotion (Ganz & Hoy, 1977), longer job tenure for insiders (Carlson, 1972; Ganz & Hoy, 1977; Helmich, 1977), and greater likelihood of success when outsiders follow administrators with long tenures in their positions (Helmich, 1977).

Frequency of succession appears to be highly contextual in its implications. While long tenure may have a curvilinear relationship with effectiveness, increased effectiveness followed by decreased or leveling off of performance, too frequent succession can be extremely disruptive to organizations (Eitzen & Yetman, 1972; Gordon & Rosen, 1981; Grusky, 1963).

Arrival Factors

The demography of an organization and the personal characteristics of new leaders are the focus of some succession research. The age, sex, educational level, length of service, race, experience, maturity, and social congruence of the successor may all be important. Organizational size, the nature of the tasks, professional or job orientation of subordinates and superordinates, and environmental norms and practices all play a role in succession (Brown, 1982; Dwyer, 1984; Grusky, 1961; Kriesberg, 1962; Pfeffer, 1983; Pfeffer & Leblebici, 1973). Socioeconomic factors, student achievement levels, and school succession have also been related (Rowan & Denk, 1983). Long lengths of service patterns tend to result in less frequent succession and more stable, predictable, and culturally consistent relationships (Pfeffer, 1982).

The ages of group members may also be an important factor. If age differences are too great because of infrequent recruiting, differences in perceptions, values, and beliefs and a lack of integration between older and younger members of the organization can result (Gusfield, 1957; McCain, O'Reilly, & Pfeffer, 1981; Wagner, Pfeffer, & O'Reilly, 1984). When combined with differences, in race, sex, education, and culture, demographic variables have considerable influence (Kanter, 1977).

Structure changes are associated with leader changes as well (Meyer, 1978). Throughout the history of succession scholarship references to changes in structure caused by succession appear. Under some conditions, instability follows succession (Grusky, 1960). Technical innovation may be spread by succession from one organization to another (Pfeffer, 1982). Perhaps disruptive in the short run, appointment of strong leaders with expertise in given areas is one way of having long term impact on organizational practice and structure. Development of the instructional leadership role of the principal through leadership change is one possible example (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982).

Succession Effects

Brown (1982) reviews three different explanations of succession effects on organizational outcomes--positive effects, dysfunctional effects, or no effects. However, though studies often document subtantial instability resulting from succession events, the long term negative or postive outcome of that instability remains substantially unestablished (Brown, 1982; Gamson & Scotch, 1964; Gouldner, 1954; Grusky, 1960; Guest, 1962; Oskarsson & Klein, 1982).

Many studies attempting to explicate succession impact on organizational outcomes rely on longitudinal data of leader effects across time (Hart, 1983; Lieberson & O'Connor; Ogawa & Hart, 1985; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1980; Weiner & Mahoney, 1981). While they have interpreted results differently, the actuarial studies tend to subsume leader succession effects into general leadership effects and confound explanations of factors unique to succession.

Miskel and Cosgrove distill the current implications of school leadership succession into major generalizations. Relating to a variety of important factors, these generalizations illustrate the complexity of social processes, interactions, and outcomes associated with leadership change in schools. They include such factors as: levels of instability, selection processes, insider/outsider origin of successor, varying impact of succession at levels of the organizational hierarchy, length of tenure effects, frequency of succession, perceptions, career orientations of successors, environmental factors, demographic characteristics, and structure. Other studies also emphasize personal traits of leaders including race, sex, education, leadership style, etc. Clearly, the connections between succession and outcomes is a difficult one. Causal relationships remain unclear. The effect of succession on organizations and organizations on successors may be causally looped and researchers and observers should exercise care in assigning either credit or blame for organizational outcomes immediately following leadership succession (Kerberg, 1978).

Methodology

Succession studies examine relevant variables from many perspectives, concentrating methodologies in three longitudinal designs (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985)--actuarial examinations of existing data (Hart & Ogawa, 1984; Lieberson & O'Connor; Ogawa & Hart, 1985; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1980; Rowan, 1982; and Rowan & Denk, 1983), naturally occurring field studies (Jackson, 1953; Lieberman, 1956; Rosen, 1970; and Miskel & Owens, 1983), and qualitative case studies (Gephart, 1978; Gouldner, 1954; and Guest, 1962; Oskarsson & Klein, 1982). While they offer rich insight and understanding, the study reported here adds to the existing research a phenomenological examination of the native view--the sense making process of the successor.

In order to examine the succession experience from the deeply emic perspective selected for the study, I chose to study my own succession to the principalship of a junior high school. While an enthnographer who is able to establish cordial working relationships with a studied culture is often able, through the use of informants and observation to probe deep into the dynamics of social interaction, the purpose of this study required access to private meetings, continual presence over a very long period, and personal information difficult or impossible for an outsider to obtain on a continuing basis. The perspective was deliberately insider. The sampling technique used was, therefore, a theoretical one, based on the successsion itself and was not intended to generalize but to generate explanations that may aid in the articulation

of hypotheses in the future.

The field method selected for the study was, admittedly, unique. A combination of total participant observation, informal interview, and the use of existing and collected documents was used. I felt that the methods chosen closely matched the "logic of the question guiding the research" (Cusick, 1981), and much of the information could not be obtained in any other way. Each evening field notes for the day were recorded on casette tape for later transcription. Field notes were divided into observations, information obtained through informal interview, and personal reactions to the experience in the form of a journal. The informal interviews were allowed to evolve naturally as individuals and groups approached me to talk. Only occasionally did I need to arrange for discussions to acquire further information and clarification of issues by seeking out individuals on my initiative. The previous administrator was a collector of papers. He left many records of school programs, philosophy, activities, and agendas from past faculty, committee, district, and PTA meetings. I also collected all correspondence, agendas, memos, and official documents generated during my succession. These documents served as data for the study.

I addressed consent for other participants in the study personally. I spoke to teachers, administrators, the superintendent, and other school personnel with whom I had frequent contact about my research interest in leadership succession and informed them that I was keeping a daily journal and written record of the events of my principalship. This process not only explained my activities but also stimulated many informative conversations with school and district members resulting in important data used in the study.

Another junior high school principal appointed from outside the district just one year before me served as a sounding board, discussing with me issues, patterns, and themes as they began to develop, checking for bias, representativeness, and outlier interpretations. During the following academic year in the fall of 1984, unstructured interviews were conducted with three teachers from the school--one the union representative, one a teacher leader, and one a respected veteran with a reputation as an outlier/maverick in the school--to check the initial issue coding and analysis for sense-making and representativeness. At this time I was no longer the principal of the school, having accepted a faculty appointment at a university.

The role that I chose to play is open to criticism. While field studies using ethnomethodological approaches are often subject to objections because of subjectivity, vagueness, or lack of generalizability, my role as both subject and researcher is deeply emic participant observation and thus highly "unique, personal, and very sensitive" (Cusick, 1981, p. 119). However, problems of inference and proof in participant observation studies must always be subject to the ultimate judgment of critical readers who will find the data plausible, perhaps even compelling, or reject findings which seem too biased to provide useful understanding (Becker, 1958).

Field notes and journal entries were collected from April 1983 through February 1984. They began when I was first contacted by the assistant superintendent and invited to apply for the principalship and ended when the field note references and analysis indicated that succession cynamics had probably ceased to be factor. The audio tapes were transcribed in the summer of 1984. Time in the field was not a problem. Neither was access.

Field notes and documents were first issue coded for descriptive, explanatory, and interpretive categories. Three readings confirmed an initial list of forty six (46) issues emerging from the data. Issues were then grouped into themes which were checked against data reported in previous succession studies for explanatory and interpretive consistency. Thirteen themes emerged from this process. The data was then analyzed again and contact summary sheets prepared for each day of the study including the theme code and a summary statement of events, individuals, and interviews/conversations. After the preparation of coded contact summary sheets, selected days from the study were recoded to check for consistency. A coding-recoding consistency of 85% was obtained.

Frequency counts of coded references were completed for all themes. A matrix of each of the intermediate themes across time was prepared with incidence of coding references recorded by date. A second matrix of substantive reference to interaction with individuals coded across time was also constructed in order to analyze the role of individuals and groups in the succession process (Guba & Lincoln, 19xx; Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Following the preparation of the matrices a distillation of the thirteen intermediate themes resulted in four interpretive themes identified across three stages in the succession and two additional interpretive and more limited themes. After collapsing categories, a second matrix of theme X time was constructed and examined for consistency of emerging patterns resulting in the division of themes by succession stages discussed in the findings section of this paper below.

A theme X individuals matrix was also constructed for comparison with the individuals X time matrix for patterns, interactions, and explanatory and interpretive purposes. Graphs of theme intensity by frequency count, theme development across time, and frequency of reference to individuals were made as data display for use during analysis and interpretation.

Setting

The study was designed to examine the native view of succession--how a principal made sense of the experience across time from the moment a succession was possible until the role of new leader no longer seemed useful for explanatory and interpretive purposes

in the school. The setting was Eagleton Junior High School, 700 students, grades 7 and 8, in a small western city of about 45,000 people. Valleytown has experienced a slow, steady growth pattern over the last several years. Because its boundaries are almost filled under current zoning, the school will probably not experience much more enrollment growth. There are two junior high schools and two high schools in the community. The students and their families at Eagleton are primarily white and upper middle to lower upper class, though a small number of students from less affluent backgrounds attend the school as a result of deliberate boundary manipulation by the Board of Education.

Valleytown is both politically and fiscally conservative. The local Chamber of Commerce is influential in school district politics. In an attempt to stabilize its revenues and protect it from state funding shortfalls that occur in the uniform school fund, the Board of Education sponsored a voted leeway election in each of the two years preceding the 1983-84 school year. Both measures failed, a result attributed by teachers and administrators to a large retirement population and taxpayers' conservativism. The most unique feature of Eagleton's feeder area is the large university which covers a substantial area of the city and dominates its social, intellectual, and economic life. Two university professors serve on the Board of Education, one of whom is its president. Since most professors at the university choose to live within Eagleton's boundaries, their children significantly affect the academic and social expectations and the attainment of students in the school.

The current superintendent of schools has been with the district for four years. Although Dr. Johnson was from the region originally, he has spent most of his professional life elsewhere, coming to the district from a superintendency in a prosperous community in the northeast via a short sojourn in professorship. There is a prevailing sense of rapid change and development among the staff, some complaining of innovation overload, others adjusting more easily to the changing professional patterns. While the previous district administration was renowned for hiring administrators from inside, Dr. Johnson has appointed several principals from outside the district since coming there, including the two junior high principals in two successive years. There is a great deal of emphasis on a district-wide program of instructional improvement, instructional leadership, and clinical supervision.

The assistant superintendent, Dr. Gary, is a long-time administrator in Valleytown. He and Dr. Johnson were the two finalists when Dr. Johnson was appointed as superintendent. While Dr. Johnson has the reputation of being highly task and outcome oriented, Dr. Gary is known as a gregarious, person centered administrator with a strong interpersonal leadership style. Dr. Gary gets along well with both the old guard in the district and the newcomers who have joined the administrative staff since Dr. Johnson's appointment as superintendent.

Eagleton's students are prosperous and know it. They dress well

in all the latest fads and sometimes openly check the labels in other students' clothes. The teachers at the school are aware of the perception of social class differences between themselves and the students and patrons of the school and made it a point to mention the situation to me the first time I met them. Appearing defensive, they warned me about the parents of Eagleton Junior High. In the community, the school had the reputation of being "out of control."

The building is suffering from age. Built with federal supplementary funds in 1932, it has been substantially remodeled only once, adding some classrooms and a gym in the early 1960s. When I arrived the most distinguishing feature of the main hall and ramps leading to the second floor was a series of brightly painted wood panels in brilliant orange, yellow, lavendar, and chartreuse, a source of constant student complaint.

My predecessor, Mr. Light, is male and was fifty-eight (58) years old at his retirement after sixteen (16) years as principal of Eagleton and ten (10) years as the assistant principal of one of the two high schools in the community. He spent his entire career as a teacher or administrator in the district. Mr. Light is a fatherly gentleman who tended to treat teachers and students as charges needing his protection and guidance. On several occasions teachers described him to me a patriarchal. Only two teachers in the building had taught under another principal. Several of the faculty later described him as a sweet man who never listened to a word anyone else had to say. However, one teacher said, "Whatever Mr. Light did for you, you always knew you owed him, and he kept track." During our conversations, Mr. Light continually emphasized now important he felt stability and tradition to be in the schools in this community, referring to his own long tenure and the even longer tenure of his predecessor. Mr. Light hand picked his assistant principal five years previously, appointing him without administrative certification (which he later obtained while working as assistant principal) on a waiver from the state. Before announcing his retirement he approached a science teacher in the school, asking if he were interested in administration and hinting broadly that he might become the new assistant principal.

The teachers at Eagleton range in experience from zero to 29 (0-29) years. They are all white and middle class. The shop teacher, spent his entire career there beginning in 1954 and is the only teacher at the school Mr. Light did not hire. The math department chair, the school counselor, Mrs. Saylor, and the shop teacher all retired at the end of the 1983-84 school year. A feeling of resentment pervaded my appointment. Mr. Cooper, the assistant principal, had been a candidate for the position and many teachers felt considerable loyalty toward him, expressing the opinion that he deserved the principalship. The most respected teacher in the building and language arts department chair, Mrs. Williamson, wrote a letter of protest to the superintendent immediately after the school board meeting at which I was appointed. Two young male faculty members were also vocal in their opposition to the appointment. Mr. Egg, a math teacher, building representative

for the teachers' union, and holding administrative certification, said, "Your appointment made me feel like the district was saying there was no hope for me." Mr. Michaelson, the union representative the previous year, expressed similar dissatisfaction.

Mr. Cooper is male, white, and forty (40) years old. With the exception of his first year, he has also spent his professional career in the district, first as an audiologist and then as Mr. Light's assistant principal. Mr. Cooper has no classroom teaching experience other than one semester of student teaching at Eagleton as a requirement of administrative certification for the state. A past president of the district teachers' union, he is well known, sociable, and has many friends among district teachers and administrators. He was a candidate for the principalship at Eagleton and later told me that Mr. Light had begun to refer occasionally to the time when he would be principal. Having never allowed Mr. Cooper to be involved in school budget or management (his assignment was maintenance and discipline) Mr. Light began in February and March to include Mr. Cooper in budget meetings, going over the computer printouts and budget categories and "preparing [him] to be more involved in administration in the school." Both Mr. Light and Mr. Cooper served as lay ecclesiastical leaders in the dominant religious group in the area.

At the time of my appointment I was just completing my PhD work at a university in a major population center to the north of the district. I was thirty-five (35) years old, white, from an upper middle class background, and female. I had never worked in the district or lived in the community, having spent my professional career as a junior high and high school teacher in two other districts. I worked the two years preceding my appointment as a research and teaching assistant at a university and had never held a line administrative position before. My family and personal life were of intense interest to the school board, teachers, and other administrators. Married to the city prosecutor of another city in the state, and not a resident of Valleytown, I have four daughters who ranged in age from four (4) to thirteen (13) years old. The opportunity to apply for the principalship at Eagleton came to me as a result of contacts I made with Dr. Johnson while on a fellowship with the state society of superintendents. I was invited to meet with the district administrators before the opening at Eagleton was announced to discuss a possible internship with them. When Mr. Light announced his intention to retire, Dr. Gary called me and invited me to apply for the position.

Findings

In this section I describe some of the findings from my nine month study of succession in the principalship. I present the nature of the succession as I experienced it, the themes that dominated stages of the succession, and the natural development of those stages.

I experienced succession in the principalship as a process, not an event. Formal positional authority dominated the early stages of my succession to the principalship. Not sufficient for a productive

working relationship, the authority relationship and personal relationships between myself and others in the school, district, and community gradually changed to one of socially validated authority, full of understanding, mutual agreement, and obligation (see Blau, 1963, p. 292). From the beginning, the respect in which the majority of the faculty held formal authority as legitimate and empowering was apparent. During my first conversation with Mr. Michaelson in the hall following my introduction to the faculty by the superintendent, he said, "We don't know what to call you--Dr. Hart, Mrs. Hart, Ann. It's not that we question whether you're the boss. We know you're the boss." The succession was a process transforming that stiff acknowledgment of power into a web of social bonds.

Three stages, consistent with patterns observed in succession studies in the past, emerge from the data. The interaction among groups and individuals separate the period of the study into three periods--April - August functioned as prearrival or presuccession; September - December was the succession period; and January - February demonstrated clear, stable relationships indicative of a postsuccession equilibrium. Prearrival, however, is less clearly defined in schools than in other types of organizations. While I arrived to take over the principalship of Eagleton on July 1, the secretaries and assistant principal had no formal involvement until August. The teachers came in to talk with me individually at my request but did not begin work until the day before school started the last week in August. The data clearly demonstrate prearrival interaction among personal traits and member intentions along with environmental norms and expectations through the first three weeks of August.

Two themes drawn from the data and from other succession studies surfaced immediately in my contact with Valleytown School District--personal traits and perceptions of participant intentions. My personal traits, qualities influential in my selection as well as potential liabilities, dominate early data and emerge again during the intensity of actual succession interactions. Participant intentions, identified as an important variable in much of the succession literature, only appeared in the presuccession uncertainties, and disappear as a factor in my own experience with increasing interactions.

Four additional themes that dominated my experience and are discussed at length below developed growing importance as the social patterns and norms interfaced and evolved. Social validation themes emerged when particular details were subsumed under categories of meaning. They were: the perceptions of actors developing across time; actors expectations; environmental norms, conditions, and events in the school, district, and community; and new social patterns, which developed gradually to a dominant position in the coded references. In the discussion that follows I demonstrate how each of the six themes delinneate the three stages of succession: prearrival, arrival or succession, and postsuccession.

It is important to pause and define carefully the six themes described below. Intentions refer to plans or goals on which participants acted and are meant to carry the implication of deliberate purpose having no connection with actual events or outcomes. Personal traits are those characteristics of personality, background, or inherent make-up that serve as distinguishing qualities and differentiate one individual from another. Perceptions in this study are the mental images or concepts imposed on events by the individuals involved.1 Expectations are anticipations for the future on the part of the participants as a result of the succession.

Personal Traits

Personal traits played an important role in the selection and prearrival process. References to skills and abilities were far more prevalent early in the experience as well as references to personal traits that might prove an obstacle to success.

Prearrival

During selection and prearrival my personal traits, both as distinct qualities or liabilities and in contrast to those of my predecessor played an important role. Some fear that I might be too academic in orientation led to personal calls to my department chair, doctoral committee chair, most recent principal, and central office personnel in my previous district. However, this process of interviews, reference screening, and selection, dominated by conventions of formality and objectivity, did not permit important trait variables that later emerged as issues to play a role in the explicit selection agenda.

When I was introduced to school board members the importance of individual traits emerged strongly. While I had already been offered the principalship and the explicit intent was to get acquainted, the meeting was an interview. Questions centered around incongruence between my personal traits and perceptions about the faculty, my qualities and those of my predecessor, and my family and personal life and that of the patterns in the community. The school board president began immediately, "Women don't like to work for women. What are you going to do about that?" The gender issue, once raised, was expressed in a variety of questions. "What does your husband think about you accepting this position?" "How many children do you have?" How old are they?" This line of questioning culminated with a telling statement by the president of the board, "You have all the comforts of life, a husband, a wonderful family. What do you want to do this for?" At the time there were no women filling secondary school administrative positions in the district. Some concern over gender also emerged in the prearrival stage with the faculty and principals. Mr. Michaelson, in a faculty meeting in May, brought the gender issue to the surface. He overheard an eighth grader remark as I walked through the school, "I wish we were going to be here next year. We could get away with anything we want with a lady principal." "As a woman, as a lady principal, how do you react to that?" he asked. At my first meeting with the

secondary school principals, one high school principal asked me to tell them about myself. When I began to describe my professional experience he interrupted me and said, "I don't mean that. Tell us about you. How many children do you have? You're husband's an attorney?"

A cluster of traits, "hard working, high energy, intellectual" with "high standards" for myself and others led the board to some concern that, though these may be the very characteristics they sought, people would be "intimidated and upset." "You know," said one member, "people on this faculty are going to be more afraid of you than you are of them." Some ambivalence was expressed as we talked. Mr. Light was "not perceived as a strong leader by the community." This lack of assertive leadership was impetus for my selection, but fear that they might have gone too far emerged.

There was a real concern on the part of board members for the feelings of those with whom I would be working. Women might feel uncomfortable; teachers might be intimidated; Mr. Cooper might be hurt that he was passed over. Consistently I began to emphasize human, personal, and relationship goals in answers to questions that had been dominated by references to instructional leadership during the selection interviews. Taking my cue from this experience, I talked about my family, emphasized my personal background, and talked a lot about my teaching and experiences in junior high schools at initial meetings with the faculty. My efforts directed toward human relations began to pay off early. After frustrating weeks attempting to elicit helpful information for the transition from Mr. Light, Mr. Cooper remarked, "I just want to congratulate you on doing such a good job being patient with [him] while he tries to let go. You're being really nice to him."

In mid-May the importance of another personal trait was revealed. I was contacted at my home by a patron of the school representing a group of concerned parents who wanted to speak with me. She arranged for a meeting at her home. In a very prosperous neighborhood of large new homes I met with a group of business and professional people whose main concerns were discipline and control of behavior (including drugs, crude language, rowdiness, and other unacceptable behavior), high achievement, and teacher competence. In a letter addressed to the superintendent a week after the meeting, the group expressed to him the belief that I possessed "the image and professional abilities necessary to succeed" at Eagleton. Socio-economic status, including my background, education level, achievement, husband's occupation, and a perceived ability to interact with parents on an equal footing played an increasingly subtle but ever present role in my experience.

Arrival or Succession

By early September, the preconceived notions of behaviors based on stereotypes began to disappear. Gender remained an issue, though on a much more personal basis, bothering fewer and fewer people. One teacher (who also made it a point to tell his students he didn't

like his wife) never chose to drop the issue. However, Dr. Gary shared, "I never worried about the male/female thing in my daily life and I don't think Dr. Johnson does either. We wouldn't have hired you if we thought we were taking a chance."

Comparison with my predecessor dominated the positive feedback from community, district, and school members. While Mr. Light interrupted, I was a listener. "You always get the feeling that she is listening to you, whether she agrees with you or not." Patronizing protectionism was contrasted with professionalism. I had no trouble shaking the patriarchal pattern. Students highlighted the serendipity. In the lunchroom the first week of school I overheard two eighth grade boys. "Light didn't know how to dress at all, but this one's OK."

Negative feedback as well was framed as comparison. Mr. Light gave the secretaries much more overt direction, assuming less independence than I and taking an active role in office work. The change caused some discomfort and frustration, particularly for the financial secretary, but was more than offset for me when the secretaries began inviting me to eat lunch with them in their alcove to the side of the main office. Parents who were professors at the university dropped by the office to talk about professional concerns and word began filtering back that, much to some people's surprise, support for my appointment was mounting. Personal traits, including socio-economic congruence with the community, gradually functioned as strengths rather than as pitfalls as uncertainty decreased.

Intentions

Receiving some attention in the succession literature, intention was a factor in this succession only in the prearrival stage. Once experience began to replace anticipation as the dominant shared social frame, motives and intentions no longer played a thematic role.

Many faculty members openly supported Mr. Cooper for the principalship. Along with that support came the implicit intention to continue to place their first loyalties with him. However, Mr. Cooper communicated the intention to offer his support to me from the beginning. We met and talked, often spontaneously, about the school and our goals. After four weeks of tentative water testing, he indicated to me that, "Several of the teachers have come to me and expressed their intention to continue to support me. I have told them that you have my support."

The intentions of other principals in the district were even more clouded. Our intitial meetings were uncomfortable. The other junior high school principal, Dr. Merrill, was openly cordial, while others were more cautious. At our first working meeting in May when we were asked to report to all the principals the results of smaller group problem-solving sessions, I was immediately appointed group recorder. By the June meetings, many principals openly introduced themselves and welcomed me into the group. By September, all of us who were secondary principals sat together at district meetings.

Even though there were several women who were principals at the elementary level, the secondary group cohesiveness dominated our interaction patterns.

The parents, accustomed to yielding influence in their environment, clearly intended to influence my work. The group that contacted me in May pressured actively and persistently for reforms in the school, specifying the form and substance of their demands. They were particularly insistent that a particular form of school-wide discipline be adopted immediately because of the "prevailing atmosphere of negativism and lack of discipline." Their children intended to keep control, enthusiastically trashing the school on the same day I met with parents.

Speculations about my intentions clearly dominated the uncertaintly of the prearrival period. When I was introduced to the two secretaries in the main office and told them I was looking forward to working with them, Mrs. Jones said, "Well we didn't know if we would be here or if you would bring in your own people." A part-time custodian, retired from the district, was very anxious that I would decide not to keep him at the school. Anticipated structural changes as a de facto reality of succession were assumed by school members.

My intentions were less dominated by formal structural behaviors. Frequent reference to the intention to create a positive atmosphere, dominated by a sense of personal responsibility in the school occurs in the data. To do that, I chose to incorporate the parents' agenda into my own by working on school discipline as a visible first step but involving teachers openly and directly in the process and emphasizing the positive. Several teachers chose to mistrust my intentions, particularly in sensitive areas of leave and employee benefits. As late as October the school maverick and outlier, was unable to convince one teacher that as an administrator I was not by definition unreliable and sneaky.

I also found a number of small projects that would make the teachers' lives a little more comfortable to complete immediately. The building is old. The faculty lunch area did not have a sink to rinse dishes in or to get water, even though a microwave (not very clean!) and refrigerator were in the room. I immediately began working on a sink and had one installed by the time school began.

Expectations

Group and individual expectations were important to the development of the succession process. Intense and present at a high level during the prearrival and arrival stages, this theme dropped off significantly after the first of December. The incongruency of expectations, based on perceptions about me and on the violation of some important environmental norms discussed below, and later events was a surprise to people. Together, perceptions, personal traits, and expectations accounted for the majority of references in the prearrival data. Like the personal traits, expectations declined during the prearrival stage as experiences

and new social patterns filled in the empty social space. By the middle of the succession period references to expectations as defined above are infrequent in the data.

Prearrival

Shared perceptions of the characteristics and expectations of Dr. Johnson and Dr. Gary dominated the expectations of Eagleton's staff in the early stage of the succession process. Dr. Gary was openly affectionate and actively pursued my recruitment to the district, but his own relationship orientation was not an early factor in influencing faculty expectations of me. The perceived task orientation, high standards, and performance expectations of the superintendent tended to dominate my early interactions with others.

Dr. Johnson implemented an instructional improvement model based on direct clinical supervision in the district two years before. Concerted effort and attention was focusing on the program the year before I arrived, and the expectation was clear in the faculty that I would pursue this program. After a faculty meeting held in May, Mr. Egg joked with another teacher who was not able to attend, telling her that I planned to leave them all alone in their rooms and let them do their own thing. Dr. Johnson's reputation as a scholar/administrator and year as a professor also influenced expectations. Because it was known that I was completing doctoral studies, the egghead expectation preceded me. Mr. Cooper, in a quiet conversation after we got to know each other, said he had expected me to be really into theories with no experience in the junior high. He was "relieved."

There was some expectation that I would develop preconceptions from talking with the previous administration and working with Mr. Cooper. Several of the teachers requested that Mr. Cooper not be present at departmental meetings where we discussed plans and expectations so that faculty would feel less constrained. There was some jockeying among faculty, but the more dominant behavior was one of "waiting to see what you're going to do." The expectation that I would do something, anything to make changes was an integral part of teacher behavior.

Arrival

The arrival stage began for the custodial staff, working in the school during the summer, with the first of July. An immediate conflict of expectations developed around the maintenance of the building. Custodial work is not often a focus of leader succession research, but in a school, principals have responsibility for and often spend a great deal of time with maintenance. Mr. Ride, the head custodian, had been used to direct involvement by the principal in the most fundamental maintenance decisions. I was not interested in the same level of involvement and worked to increase his independence. The building was full of broken furniture and equipment, outdated textbooks, and disgarded supplies. One classroom was filled to the ceiling with

broken desks. Mr. Ride wanted me to decide which desks to disgard. I arranged for district transportation to the dump for much of the debris and we made some progress. By the end of July Mr. Cooper remarked, "How'd you get old Bud to do that?" The change in expectations on this fundamental environment question did not come without cost. Not long after Mr. Cooper returned to work in August Mr. Ride complained to him quite bitterly about my unrealistic expectations. It was not until district supervisors began to compliment Mr. Ride on the building that he felt better. By October, however, an elementary school principal in the district told me that her custodian told her that my custodian liked me.

I continued to communicate on my initiative with the parent group that contacted me in May. With parents as vocal and interested as the patrons of Eagleton, I valued their help. Three seemingly disparate expectations fell together in the succession at this stage: shared behavioral standards enforced through firm consistency and positive environment; parent consultation and involvement; and teacher participation and the abandonment of the patriarchal interaction pattern with the principal. These three expectations combined to create an opportunity for direct consultation with the teachers on a substantive issue, impetus for the formation of a school/community council, and the end to the uncertainty felt by teachers waiting to see what I would do.

My reputation influenced member expectations as well. Unaware that I had a reputation, I soon learned differently. At the second principals' meeting I attended, the special education director said, "I'm pleased to finally meet you. I've heard a lot of good things about you." Though maddeningly unspecific, her remark preceded other similar statements. A reputation developed quickly on the teacher grape vine. One teacher who transferred to a counseling position at a high school returned to tell me that he heard that I listened to people and that I was positive and emphasizing the positive. Another teacher, working on his science room remodeling project duringt the summer made it a point to remark to Mr. Cooper that he was pleased with the new principal. During several interviews with teachers I was told that they had heard good things about me. "I had to come in and see you," remarked one teacher I had not met personally. "I've heard so many positive things about you."

Arrival

Student expectations played little role, with the exception of the general pre-conception that women principals aren't tough, until the beginning of school. The school-wide discipline plan prepared in consultation with faculty members and parents was presented to the students in a handbook and then in small group discussions with me during the first week of school. The effect was predictable. Junior high students believe only what they experience in school, not what they hear. They had no solid expectations that life at school would be any different.

Reputation again played a role in the feedback of information through the succession process. Toward the end of September I hustled a group of lingering eighth graders on to class when they were late. Later that day one of their teachers related that a girl in his class had said to him, "You know that new principal's nice, but she can be mean too." The class was working on group projects, but conversation in the room came to an immediate halt as the group listened in on the exchange between teacher and student.

Altered expectations began to spread in the community as well. At the first meeting of the newly formed school/community council in October a parent made the reputation issue plain. "I want you to know that we heard wonderful things about you before you ever came here, and we're expecting great things from you at Eagleton." The school board president made it a point to tell me that patrons who had openly opposed my appointment had approached him in the grocery store to tell him they'd changed their minds. Incidents involving teachers from other schools demonstrate a wide ranging network of positive reputation that seemed to feed on itself and spread as the succession period developed. Teachers would tell me that they heard something from a friend who heard something from a parent. . . . Heresay became the major positive influence. The salutory effects of the snowballing rumor mill reached an apex at back to school night when parents, teachers, and district administrators talked about the new positive developments at Eagleton, the increased confidence and pride of the teachers, and the approval of the community.

A positive result occurred when the contrast between community and faculty fears and suspicions and school events became more and more apparent. Expectations were confirmed or disconfirmed by unfolding events through November, and fewer and fewer references to future expectations occurred. As anticipation evolved into an accumulation of memories, expectation patterns gradually ceased to be a significant factor in the social dynamics of the succession process.

Perceptions

Individual and group perceptions evolved in substance over the course of the succession process. The theme pattern declined slowly in frequency, beginning as the most intense of the six factors in my experience and ending roughly equivalent to norms in the environment. As interactions occurred, people observed, and perceptions framed by mental images changed.

Prearrival

Reputation, association with education and task qualities of the selection agent, and attitudes about my backgroud led to uncertainty whether I would fit at Eagleton. As I mentioned above, Mr. Cooper was concerned that my experience in junior high would be limited if not non-existent, and I would not have the "kind of commitment and experience necessary to run a junior high school." Though no other

interviews yielded exactly this information from other staff, the vigor of the rumor mill, the affection and support faculty members felt for Mr. Cooper, and other indications of faculty concern led me to feel many in the school shared this prearrival perception.

I was the unintegrated factor in the school social structure at this stage, the majority of the coding references to perceptions in the data are my own. At an early faculty meeting teachers questioned me directly about my perceptions of Valleytown, the parents and surrounding community, and Eagleton. One teacher asked me, "What have you been told about Valleytown?" The question was followed by a group conversation, sharing of images and biases. By directly soliciting my perceptions and responding to them, by confirming or contesting them the faculty sought to influence me. During individual interviews with the teachers in August, many of them stated their feelings more emphatically, calling the parents "difficult" with "elitist" attitudes.

Mr. Light shared his unsolicited judgments of teachers freely. Previous interactions were, for me, snipits of information rather than social patterns and were hard to digest as useful information. In many ways, they were more obfuscatory than informative, though they were offered in an attempt to be helpful. One teacher was characterized as making a game of "undermining the assistant principal," another as "someone in this faculty you should listen to."

My relationship with peers at the district level was also dominated by my perceptions of their reactions to me. I thought that I was prepared for some discomfort on their part but found that I was surprised at the strength of the initial reticience of all but a few of the other principals and district office administrators. Dr. Johnson and Dr. Gary, with their open and strong support, were my major source of peer reinforcement in the early stages. Dr. Merrill soon joined them and later came to dominate my peer network system.

During personal interviews, with teachers in August, I developed a picture of the perceptions, attitudes, and philosophies of each teacher and began to learn which people interacted regularly. Two teachers chose not to keep their appointments with me. Strong perceptions developed from that behavior as well. Not surprisingly given the data reported in national and regional surveys, discipline concerns emerged. Teachers felt that office to teacher communication was poor and that teachers who want to have discipline standards in their classrooms and in the school as a whole were not supported. Mrs. Williamson, center of the largest network in the school and probably the teacher most respected by the faculty as a whole, said that my emphasis on the positive had come through to the faculty. They knew where I stood, she said.

This developing perception of the "new" environment at the school worked to my advantage. Early in August Mr. Cooper said that he was "having a good time." Later the anticipation we were feeling about the possible results of our efforts were related by him. "For the

first time in three years I'm actually looking forward to the start of school." These perceptions remained totally isolated from any actual outcome effects.

Arrival

At the arrival/succession stage, the exchange of perceptions between members of the school staff helped to solidify them. A great deal of socializing took place in the main office among teachers, secretaries, and the administrators. The secretaries are hard working and supportive of the faculty and are much liked by them. Early in the second week of school, Mrs. Jones told me that she had overheard a lot of teachers talking about me. They had, she said, "a lot of respect" for me, and she had not heard "one bad thing." As exchanges of information among school and district staff took place, the social interaction gradually replaced intentions, personal traits, expectations, and perceptions as the major reference between myself and others in the succession. One day in September, walking down the hall with the science department chair, I said, "I love this job." He replied, "I can tell. It shows. And I'm not the only one who's impressed." During a discussion of negotiation problems in a particularly tense principals' meeting, the outsider issue discussed under environmental norms below surfaced. One elementary principal involved in state programs said, "Somebody said to me when I was at a meeting in the capital, 'How did you get Ann Hart?'" After the meeting, a high school principal who had seemed very unsure about me in the past stopped me and, along with others, expressed his support.

Developing perceptions that contradict previous expectations are particularly strong by their contrast. A major concern of teachers and Mr. Cooper had been my field orientation. As my involvement with students and active participation in discussions about teaching with the faculty developed, the perception of me as a teacher grew and faculty increasingly commented about the timeliness, intensity, and strength of my teaching experience and skills.

The exchange of perceptions involved the parents as well. A parents meeting, held in early September to communicate our programs and goals, prompted one teacher who attended to say, "I wish all the teachers could have been there to see you express such support for the faculty." The parents were responsive and supportive, though not without criticisms, at subsequent meetings. At back to school night in late September many parents sought me out to tell me that they perceived "united feelings" in the faculty and had the sense that the faculty "supported" me. It was to my advantage that Dr. Johnson's son was a student at the school, and he was present. A substantial number of the Eagleton parents are professors at the university. During a principals' meeting at which Dr. John Goodlad was a guest, a professor parent was in attendance. He later complimented me on my comments during the discussion. The social congruence that these perceptions made possible are discussed in the social patterns section below.

Student perceptions became a factor during the succession stage. While observing in a math class I helped students with their seat work. Initially reluctant, the students soon accepted my presence and participation in the class. Later that day, a student stopped me in the hall. "You'd make a good TA [teaching assistant]," she said. During the assembly at which the results of studentbody election results were announced, I had the opportunity to be both a very good sport (playing rather a silly part) and firm. Students in the halls afterwards said, "You were great!"

Negative perceptions also surfaced. By late August the media coordinator, who had functioned the previous year as both school and district coordinator, began to feel that my presence was the cause of her declining power at the district level. Because of complaints about the level of service from Mr. Light to Dr. Gary and budgetary constraints, Dr. Gary, in consultation with me, decided to cut back her time at the district and base her offices at Eagleton for her remaining district work. She was extremely upset by that decision. Our interactions never recovered from her initial judgment that I was responsible for the frustration of her goals and ambitions. A conflict over evening parent conferences also developed, because I interpreted silence as agreement during a faculty meeting in October where I asked for feedback and suggestions. By the time conferences were organized in November, the conflict had escalated without opportunity for discussion and clarification.

Postsuccession

By early December, references to perceptions began to involve more and more the daily interactions of school work. Problem-solving, negotiation of turf, teaching, and student interactions dominate perceptions. Mr. Cooper and I worked on job and time management adjustments to cut down on his feelings of fragmentation; use of video machines by teachers was negotiated with the media coordinator to help protect against perceptions of copyright violation; and roiling and churning over students, discipline, and events and the daily sorting out of perceptions about what happened came top dominate. I felt a growing security in Mr. Cooper and a surity in the way teachers approached me.

At the faculty Christmas reception the last day of school before the holidays, theteacher who had transferred to a high school returned for a visit. His remark to me was, "I hear from several faculty that they like it better here than they ever have, and you're the only thing that has changed."

Environmental Norms

Environmental norms at the school, community, and district levels developed as the only theme pattern remaining at a stable and consistent level throughout the succession experience. While norms influenced the succession process through the expectations and perceptions of

organizational members and Eagleton's staff was willing to grant wiggle room to me after social patterns were established, norms remained firmly established over the nine months of the study. Though the time of the study was short, changes in norms is a slow, evolutionary process and may relate more directly to life and work in organizations than to the succession experience.

Prearrival

I was an outsider. Those who have never worked in a school district in which insider, hand-picked administrators are the norm have difficulty conceptualizing the depth of distrust and anger that can be generated when that norm is broken. Dr. Johnson began appointing outsiders as principals during his first year as superintendent, bringing in the first woman in the principalship in the district from outside the same year he appointed another woman principal from inside. The year preceding my appointment the other junior high school principalship was filled by an outsider as well, a professor from the northwest who had grown up in the area. In a small district in which administrative opportunities are limited, this trend caused considerable resentment and frustration.

The concern the Board of Education members felt about this development was expressed to me at my meeting with the board in April just prior to the official announcement of my appointment. While they were eager to pursue the reform and development policies of Dr. Johnson, they knew that teachers throughout the district and many parents seriously disapproved of the number of outsider appointments. A former neighbor of mine, a resident of Valleytown, expressed the reaction to my appointment in some quarters of the community, barely able to disguise her agreement. "People are pretty upset." My outsider status was exacerbated by the presence of an inside candidate in the school, Mr. Cooper, whom Mr. Light and many teachers expected would be appointed.

Long tenure was also a norm in the district. Not only did my appointment elicit complicated emotional reactions for the present, it also led people to wonder how long new principals would stay in any given position, raising the level of speculation about future changes.

While women had worked as elementary school principals in the district for four years, there were no women in secondary principalships or assistant principalships. Whatever the good intentions, the presence of a woman in secondary line administration was new and, for many, uncomfortable. Though board members were frank about their concerns in our private meeting in April, the issue was not openly discussed after that. There was some worry that Mr. Cooper would find the situation difficult. However, I am married, have children, and affiliate with the major religious group in the community, norms that legitimated my status in the eyes of the district members and the community.

At the school level, much of our initial interaction centered

around the Coke vs. Pepsi debate and what kind of soda and snack machines to get for the faculty lounge. As low risk topics, these discussions served as a way for the faculty to interact, joke, and relax with me during the early periods of April and May. During the summer I was able to violate a school norm that irritated many of the staff and thus gain some amused support for my eccentricity. I threw things away. I had the front hall and ramps painted. The interaction this entailed with the custodian is detailed in the expectations discussion above, but the effect on others surprised me. Many of the teachers were pleased. They saw housecleaning as a noncontroversial way to accomplish immediate change (an expectation whenever a new leader takes over) without much meaning. No one risked anything, but the succession was symbolically underway. Comments like, "How did you manage that?" or "I never liked those primary school colors in that hall" came from the teachers.

During the prearrival period for the teachers but after my formal succession to the principalship I was able to use another environmental and professional norm to become more involved with the teachers. Using the clues from my meetings with departments and individuals and from my meetings with the parent group that contacted me in April, I worked with the teachers and Mr. Cooper during July and August to develop a school-wide plan for discipline. It incorporated some of my positive student control and reward agenda, involved the teachers in planning the change, allowed me to formally involve the union representatives at Eagleton on a more active level, recognized the legitimacy of parent concerns, and brought diverse groups together weeks before the beginning of school. One teacher called me long distance from her summer job in Jackson Hole, Wyoming to respond to my letter, because she could not come for an interview. Adult community norms are always challenged on some level by adolescents, but the perception of blatant and open violation of behavioral norms at Eagleton frustrated the community and the teachers. A defined "problem" thus served as a way for me to rapidly engage myself in participation in the support of a norm valued by community, district, and school staff. It also allowed me to indirectly address the concern, unspoken by everyone but the students, that a woman can't run a tight ship in a secondary school. One teacher quietly expressed his skepticism in late August saying to Mr. Cooper, "Don't you really run the school?"

Arrival

Time with students is both valuable and symbolic. During the second week of school a teacher stopped me in the hall to remark that she found it refreshing to see a principal who spends time in the halls with the kids--talking, joking, and supervising. The social patterns that developed as a result of this and other activities will be discussed in following section.

It was during the succession stage that teachers began to communicate directly to me how they felt when I was appointed. Mrs. Williamson wrote a letter of protest to Dr. Johnson in April. She stopped by

my office in the middle of September to tell me she now understood and agreed with the decision. Others would drop by and express support, but add the codicil that they still believed that loyalty should be rewarded and outsiders were disruptive. The appointment of administrators from outside became one of the focal points of union protest when the district was unable to reach a settlement with the teachers before the beginning of school. The acrimony in this exchange centered around the deepseated fear that there would not be opportunities. These feelings remained in other principals as well. There was no missing the message that, while it may not be personal, suspicion and resentment remained. References to the discomfort generated by the outsider issue occurred throughout the year though they became less and less frequent as time progressed.

Teachers like their principals to be in the building. While Eagleton's teachers openly accepted the legitimacy of my district assignments and travel to deliver research presentations, they could not reconcile the conflict between their desire to have me present all the time and even legitimate absences. After one three day trip for an assignment as chair of a district committee, Mr. Cooper greeted me with the spontaneous cry, "Ann, you've just got to be in this building more!" This issue was never resolved.

Involvement at the district level provided environmental interaction. Before too many weeks had passed I was chairing a special task force to examine the future of junior high school education in the district and serving as the secondary school administrative respresentative on a district task force to develop a career ladder plan for teachers. These assignments, while taxing in time and energy, provided opportunities to know and work with teachers and administrators from around the district on an extended basis.

Community norms were well established, conservative, and middle class. While my choice of professional aspirations was somewhat unusual, my congruence with the majority of community values and characteristics, my ability to interact on an equal footing with school patrons and formation of a formal structure (community/school council) to involve them, and my willingness to keep my mouth shut on certain political and personal issues made me less conspicuous than I might have seemed. In short, I fit.

Postsuccession

Data coding references to environmental norms in this stage are almost totally unrelated to leadership change. Parents were concerned about behavioral standards in all the secondary schools. The Valleytown City Council hired a youth drug officer with whom we began to work closely because of community fears and uncertainty. District personnel policies representing less discretionary freedom in professional leave decisions led to a hue and cry. Teacher turf conflicts between subject areas and between special education and regular classroom teachers needed to be resolved. In short, while life in the administration

of schools is never dull, specific school, district, and community environmental factors related to succession issues declined rapidly after December.

Social Patterns

Social patterns integrating a new group member take time to develop. While succession studies conducted by non-participants have found social patterns to be a significant factor in succession, in this study the development of social patterns, the dynamics of group and individual interactions that involved me in the social web of Valleytown School District and Eagleton Junior High came to dominate my succession experience. Data coding of social patterns was almost non-existent in the prearrival stage. This is not surprising, because I had no opportunity to be a part of the social world. Early coding refers often to either observations of existing social patterns or to a sense of exclusion from the patterns, either because of newness or because of specific personal or environment barriers discussed in the preceding sections.

A dramatic change in the frequency of social interaction coding begins the succession/arrival stage in this study, and the frequency of social pattern development continued to increase through the succession. It was only at the postsuccession stage that new social interaction patterns ceased to be developed and an identifiable equilibrium was reached. The delinneation of the postsuccession stage is characterized by a high level of stable social patterns, a recognition of norms in the relevant environments, and a continual adjustment of perceptions as the organization's members went about their work.

Prearrival

Acceptance of authority and its legitimacy in organizations is strong in the social structure of Valleytown, the school district, and Eagleton Junior High. In one summer interview a teacher responded to my attempts to elicit some preference for school-wide policies or ideas for possible consideration with, "You just tell us what we have to do, and we'll do what you say." While this is an extreme example, other references to respect for formal authority appear in early coding. This recognition of formal/rational authority was a barrier as well. Direct obedience was required, but a suspicion and isolation between administrators and teachers remained as a constant undercurrent. There was an impatience and distance that was unmistakeable in the tone of voice and behavior of the teacher who so openly supported authority. An English teacher at Eagleton who developed undiagnosed health problems during the spring of 1983 and needed extended sick leave in the fall continued to believe throughout my interactions with her July through December that the personnel director and I would try to deprive her of her benefits rights if she were not vigilant. It was not until I had many contacts with her and finally after she returned to work in January that much of that suspicion was allayed.

The teachers and administrators were having authority conflicts throughout the district. While administrators were asked to join the teachers union, the teachers wanted to exclude them from strategy and discussion meetings at the district and school level. I was not exempt from this suspicion. In late September a contract agreement needed ratification from the membership. The teachers could not decide whether to admit administrators to the school meetings. They finally agreed to invite all union members, which excluded many teachers. After further discussion, all professional staff in the buildings were invited to the meetings. While many of the teachers at Eagleton took the time to assure me that their feelings were not personally directed toward me, and I was invited to the meeting by the salaries and contracts representative, the message was clear--you are an administrator. These conflicts remained high throughout the fall and spilled into Eagleton.

Students at Eagleton adopted the same response pattern. If someone in authority does not directly command you to do something, you don't. Consequently, lunchroom duty was akin to a sentence in a Siberian mental hospital. The halls were empty of teachers. Just before school was closed in the spring of 1983 the students saved their papers for weeks and then by some electric signal, trash the halls after school, leaving paper a foot or more deep in some places.

My social interaction patterns began in a narrow circle, gradually expanding to include more and more people. Early in May, Mr. Cooper and I began to talk about our families as well as school issues and goals. Coded references to Mr. Cooper in the data are twice as prevalent as those to the next most frequently referenced individual. Another person who emerged in the pre-arrival stage as an important factor was also a peer and colleague. Dr. Merrill called me in July and came over to Eagleton to talk. We ended up spending the whole afternoon together sharing experiences and making plans to work closely during the year. Finally, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Gary played an important role, my contact with Dr. Gary increasing as our work brought us together more.

My succession changed the interaction patterns of teachers with the principal at Eagleton. The contact by mail, telephone, and personal discussions in August gave me an opportunity to meet and talk privately with most of the teachers before our formal work together began, rather than attempting to get to know them in work groups, infrequently visited, or in weekly faculty meetings gathered together exhausted and bored in the library after school. I also worked closely in the late summer with teachers representing the union in the building. As we planned the school-wide discipline plan I met with the past year's building representative as well as the current and representative elect. In fact, after Mr. Cooper, Mr. Egg was the school member with whom I most often worked directly.

There were also conflict patterns that developed. The media coordinator was eager to make many changes in the concept of media

on which everyone based their work. She was eager, hardworking, and demanding of a great deal of time. Mr. Egg half-jokingly requested in August that I not allow her to have any time on the agenda in faculty meeting if I wanted peace in the faculty. Decisions that I made, the new work arrangement Dr. Gary set up with her, and my attempts to negotiate turf between her and the other teachers resulted in a continual conflict. In August she said to Mr. Cooper, "She just doesn't understand. She is new and she doesn't know how we do things here."

The secretarial staff at Eagleton came to be a tremendous personal and social factor as well as a work factor. Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Workman, and the counseling office secretary were all hired by Mr. Light and respected him a great deal. Their initial reactions to me were distant and uncertain. In the pre-arrival stage, when I was visiting the school periodically, Mrs. Workman would type letters for me. Both school secretaries returned to the school before the teachers, so we had the opportunity to work in a quiet atmosphere together, and our relationship improved rapidly.

Arrival/Succession

For different groups and social patterns the prearrival/arrival differentiation time was different. Arrival for principals began with a week long principals workshop in June; for the custodial staff it was in July; for the secretaries and Mr. Cooper August; for the teachers and students, September. This staggered pattern had many advantages for me, allowing me to get to know people gradually.

Valleytown is not a large district, but it is large enough to support some district level services. After meeting with Dr. Gary late in July, I overheard snatches of a conversation he and several others were having with the district maintenance director, Dr. Rod Phill. Dr. Phill was complaining about the new principal of one of the elementary schools, a young woman new to the district as well. "That little gal," he said, "wants her whole school re-keyed and she wants me to pay for it" (our of his budget, of course). The conversation changed directions, but I walked into the room and said I want my whole school re-keyed, Rod. When can you have it done? [illegible], Rod, I'm Ann Hart." Laughter was followed by his reply, "I assumed as much." Our relationship remained on that footing, based on teasing, support, and laughter, and Rod was able to help me in the early stages at my school by putting some of my work requests (like the faculty sink and water heater) ahead of other jobs.

Colleagial social patterns also developed rapidly during succession. Dr. Merrill was my primary peer support. Beginning in July we had increasing contact and worked closely together on school and district issues. As our interests converged and we discovered more and more shared values and goals, support contact increased. Dr. Gary, and to a lesser extent, Dr. Johnson also offered important peer support. During the first two weeks of July, Dr. Gary sent me with four other principals in the district to a workshop and training session together

for two weeks out of town. The friendships that were formed on that trip continued to grow and were the basis of my contacts with the elementary school principals. The two teachers with whom I had the most contact were Mr. Egg and Mr. Williamson, two young men who both expressed an interest in school administration and initially opposed my appointment vigorously.

The teachers at Eagleton had never been observed in their classrooms before Dr. Johnson began an instructional improvement program in the district. The year before I arrived Mr. Light began to observe, following the training he was receiving from the district. Forces in the nation imposed themselves on Eagleton Junior High with the increased attention on instructional leadership, clinical supervision, and school improvement. These themes played an important role in my interaction with the people at Eagleton. My perceived expertise as a teacher did not hurt me in the role of supervisor and instructional leader, which was often the impetus for contacts with teachers, particularly the new teachers in the building. There were five new teachers and seven other teachers with less than three years experience. Direct observation, conferencing, informal classroom visits, suggesting, and coaching constituted a large part of my social interaction with them. The drama teacher, new that year, had many problems, increasing in frequency and intensity, and my close work with her received attention from the rest of the faculty, including consultation with the union representatives. However, conflicts with two senior teachers who had difficulties resulted from direct supervision. One of the teachers shared the opinion with another teacher, "Ann's great to work with when you agree with her, but watch out if you don't." Given the number of issues around which disagreements develop in education and in all complex work groups, the faculty and I worked to be able to joke about some of ours. During one faculty meeting in November I expressed a strong opinion then joked that I'd always been reticent to tell people what I thought. Mr. Oval, the metals teacher and most senior staff member, said, "The hell you are." Laughter became our cement.

The teachers and secretaries also talked together a lot, and the office chats became a real social staging area. While not all teachers in the building would stay and interact, it was very common for some and common for most of the faculty on occasion to stand for a moment and talk with the secretaries and administrators causually about families, recreation, or politics, and gripe about the district. I completed my final oral exams for my doctorate at that time. When I arrived at the university, I found a bouquet of flowers waiting for me with a note, "Good luck. From your Eagleton Supporters."

During the succession stage another group of professionals played an increasing part in my interactions with people. The district provided psychologist, social work, and nursing support, and we had a special education department and a counselor. Staffing of students experiencing difficulties either in their schooling or personal and family lives became an important part the work. A social workgroup made up of Mr. Cooper, the special education chairperson, the school counselor,

the psychologist, the social worker assigned to the school, and myself came to have considerable importance for students with difficulties and for teachers who worked with them. The psychologist, who worked with us as part of a district assignment, said we had a reputation as a group that did things. She remarked in late November that it was a pleasure to be doing something about problems, taking action to alleviate diagnosed or observed difficulties, though I also was criticized by a district level administrator as "too hard on kids."

Another social interaction developed around the assignment of department chairperson. While Mr. Light had combined the staffing and chairpersons meeting, I found it more useful to separate those two groups, even though there was some overlap between them, so that meetings would be shorter and extremely delicate issues with ramifications for confidentiality could be better addressed in staffing. Both sessions became much more informal and the atmosphere more personable and cordial when they were separated. More task behaviors appeared in those sessions, as well.

The students had a tremendous impact on social patterns I experienced in succession. In the first few weeks of school I spent a great deal of time with them in the halls, in classes, and in the lunchroom. I made an effort to talk with students rather than to supervise. At the first dance of the year I discovered that the teachers and Mr. Cooper hovered around the perimeter, while I was the only adult who circulated among the students. We talked and joked. Later, Mr. Cooper adopted this practice at the school dances. Several games developed between student groups and me. One particularly spirited group of eighth grade boys greeted me at the beginning of the second week of school with a mass salute in the hall, which I returned, deliberately awkward, by hitting myself in the nose. This practice continued for the rest of the year. Mrs. Saylor, the counselor, invited me to a session between two groups of girls who were developing a rather serious conflict pattern. We had a good counseling session. Students, more (often but not exclusively girls\Ø began dropping by my office to talk about a problem at school or at home. At back to school night my most frequent compliment from the parents was prefaced by, "My son/daughter thinks you're wonderful. . . ." At the end of the election assembly late in September, students were effusive (junior high, remember). "That was great, Dr. Hart. You're crazy." By the end of October an eighth grade boy who had been in a great deal of trouble during seventh grade and was working on maintaining his reputation told his art teacher that he thought I was "very nice." Kids often think principals are jerks, and I certainly had opportunities to enforce rules, take disciplinary action, and mediate student/teacher conflicts, but the student support I felt as the succession stage matured began to permeate other interactions with community, district, and teachers.

Summary

The study reported in this paper was a phenomenological examination of a successors sense-making. When culture and belief (Deal & Kennedy,

1982; Bolman & Deal, 1984) play an important role in the work and life in organizations, the study of succession is enhanced by the addition of a perspective. The purpose of the study was to explore succession from my unique perspective as the new leader and to analyze and explain the events and processes as I experienced them.

Through the interaction of intentions, personal traits, expectations, perceptions, and environmental norms, new social patterns emerged that included the new leader. Initial acceptance of formal authority was transformed into socially validated authority by the process of succession and the accumulation of events across time. The process was disruptive, uncertain, and both positive and negative, but whether it was dysfunctional or productive in its effects on organizational outcomes is not answered here. Other studies in organizations conclude that social processes dominate the work of administration and leadership (Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Martin & Willower, 1981; Mintzberg, 1973). Myth and ceremony play a significant role in the work of leaders in organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). Additionally, recent explorations into leadership effects reveal new ways of looking at the leader's role in organizations that include numerous symbolic, attributional, and multi-faceted views (Meyer, 1978; Pfeffer, 1978; Weick, 1978). The question of ultimate effects of succession on organizational performance in this study would require an examination of the nature of the eventual state of equilibrium resulting from the aggregate of social patterns and processes, the eventual legitimacy of the social validated authority for relevant groups in the school, district, and community, and events evolving out of the process of organizing and working continually in the school--general leadership effects, not succession effects.

Social processes explicated in this study were interactive, not uni-directional. Validation by two respected selection agents affected work group and community perceptions. Community validation affected my superiors and my work group. The validation of my authority by the work group affected the community, my superiors, and the students in the school. The students' validation of my social authority affected the community, the work group, and my superiors (one of whom happened also to be the parent of a student in the school). And so it went on. Organizational memories tend to be long. Once the positive information began to be exchanged by members of the community, district, and school groups, a snowballing of effects was set off.

Additionally, though the initial facts of the selection and surface norms of the environment indicated a socially very difficult succession, social validation process revealed that many criteria were actually in my favor. Environmental events and trends influence the interaction of principals and schools in succession substantially (Dwyer, 1984). At the time of my succession, socialized in the expectation that principals should function as instructional leaders, possessing successful and recent teaching experience, and completing advanced training in educational administration that gave me an a priori advantage in the community, I was environmentally right. My personal background was congruent with the school's immediate community. Dr. Johnson was moving quickly,

but he had the support of the school board and particularly of two of its powerful members, both of whom were also university professors. Recent recruiting provided me with good opportunities to develop peer support. Though administrative positions were relatively scarce, that very scarcity has been shown to enhance the likelihood that social criteria will be applied in the succession process (Boldt, 1978). I also was following a principal who had a long tenure, increasing the likelihood of success.

The question of succession effects on organizational outcomes is unanswered. Past succession studies using various organizational outcomes to measure effects use a variety of techniques, lagging data across time, attempting to control for other influences on performance. My experience in this case does not support the usefulness of the succession effects question. Succession itself was experienced as a process with meaning and importance in the social reality of organizational life, and the ultimate performance effects of that process hinge on the result of that dynamic. Changing leaders per se may or may not be positive or negative. The social validation of authority relationships with others dominated my experience.

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